

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8857

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 2231

SANTO DOMINGO FOR STRASSER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, HA

SUBJ: CABINET CHANGES RUMORED

1. ALTHOUGH AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED CURRENT CABINET IS OF GOOD OVERALL QUALITY AND THREE OF ITS KEY MEMBERS (BROS, FOURCAND, LEVEQUE) WORK PARTICULARLY WELL TOGETHER, WE HAVE ANOTHER SPATE OF RUMORS ABOUT FURTHER CHANGES, AND WE PASS THOSE ALONG DESPITE THEIR NEBULOUS NATURE AND UNCERTAINTY AS TO PRECISE TIMING OF ANY SHIFTS (EITHER SHORTLY AFTER NOV 18 ARMED FORCES DAY OR AT NEW YEAR'S).

2. RUMORS CENTER AROUND THREE FIGURES:

A. INTERIOR. PAUL BLANCHET, AS WE NOTED ELSEWHERE (PAUP A-110) IS A STORMY PETREL, A DOCTRINAIRE, IRASCIBLE, BUT INCONTESTABLY HONEST DUVALIERIST OF THE OLD SCHOOL. HE HAS SOUGHT TO CLEAN OUT DEADWOOD IN CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIONS, INSISTS ON STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE LAW, AND HAS PROMOTED COMMUNAL FORESTS (WITHOUT, HOWEVER, ASSURING NECESSARY LOCAL FOLLOW-UP). HIS XENOPHOBIA IS LEGENDARY AND HE INVEIGHS BOTH AGAINST LOCAL SYRIANS (WHO CONTROL SIGNIFICANT SECTORS OF ECONOMY) AND AGAINST WHAT HE CONSIDERS AN UNDIGNIFIED

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DEPENDENCE UPON FOREIGN AID. AT A TIME WHEN MAJOR EXTERNALLY

SUPPORTED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS ARE BEGINNING AND WHEN GOVERNMENT IS INTENSIFYING EFFORTS TO ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTORS, BLANCHET'S STYLE SEEMS ANACHRONISTIC. THE RECENT RELIEF OF HIS BROTHER JULES FROM HIS LONG-TIME POST AS HEAD OF THE COUR SUPERIEURE DES COMPTES AT FINANCE IS REGARDED AS A PRELIMINARY TO REMOVING BOTH BLANCHET BROTHERS FROM EFFECTIVE INFLUENCE.

B. HEALTH. DR. DANIEL BEAULIEU HAS EXCELLENT CREDENTIALS IN BOTH RURAL AND CITY PRACTICE AND IS A GREGARIOUS, DEDICATED MINISTER, BUT IS GIVEN TO ECCENTRIC NOTIONS (I.E., RESETTLING PEASANTS FROM MOUNTAINSIDES TO VALLEY SO AS TO FACILITATE EXTENSION SERVICES). HIS PARTIAL DEAFNESS IS A HANDICAP.

C. NATIONAL BANK. THE VENERABLE ANTONIO ANDRE HAS SEEN HIS AUTHORITY GRADUALLY CIRCUMSCRIBED AND OTHERS USURP HIS ROLE (AS WHEN TWO YOUNGER OFFICIALS RECENTLY DRAFTED AN ORDER TO DECOUPLE THE GOURDE FROM THE DOLLAR, A MOVE ANDRE WAS ABLE TO BLOCK WHEN HE LEARNED OF IT). ANDRE RETAINS ACCESS TO THE PRESIDENT, HOWEVER, AND WAS ABLE TO PERSUADE THE PALACE TO TAKE SOME NECESSARY STEPS TO DEAL WITH THE WORSENING BALANCE OF PAYMENTS. FINDING A SUCCESSOR WILL BE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT, AND ONE MAN MENTIONED, EDRISS VINCENT OF IDAI, CO-AUTHORED THE ABORTIVE MONETARY "REFORM" AND THUS WOULD SEEM TO HAVE LOST SOME OF THE PRESIDENT'S CONFIDENCE. HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS WILL PLAY A MAJOR PART IN ANDRE'S RETIREMENT OR RELIEF.

3. FEW OF THE OTHER CABINET MEMBERS ARE CITED IN CURRENT RUMOR MILLS AS VULNERABLE, AND AT LEAST ONE--PUBLIC WORKS SECRETARY PETIT--HAS ACQUIRED FRESH AUTHORITY TO COMMIT FUNDS FOR RAOD BUILDING AND REGENERATING THE CAPITAL'S ARCHAIC DRAINAGE SYSTEM. FOURCAND, THE ENERGETIC COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER, ALSO SEEMS WELL ENSCONCED, DESPITE PALACE DISPLEASURE OVER HIS ROLE IN THE ABORTIVE MOVE ON FOREIGN EXCHANGE POLICY AND CRITICISM FROM THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY FOR HAVING AGREED TO A COMPREHENSIVE MULTIFIBER AGREEMENT WITH THE US LIMITING GROWTH RATES WHICH LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS HAVE COME TO TAKE FOR GRANTEDM
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